

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 1864

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS PN

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM-PANAMA

REF: STATE 051768

FOLLOWING RESPONSES ARE KEYED TO QUESTIONS IN PARA 5
REFTEL.

1. PARA 5A. DISCUSSION WITH PANAMANIAN NATIONAL
GUARD (GN) TRAINING OFFICIALS ON GENERAL SUBJECT OF
TRAINING COSTS LEAD US TO ANTICIPATE NO SIGNIFICANT
IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS FROM PROPOSED
COST INCREASES.

2. PARA 5B. TECHNICAL COURSES ARE OF GREATEST INTEREST
TO GN AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES ARE CONSIDERED
SECONDARY. GOP IS PAYING FOR SOME PILOT TRAINING (NAVAL
ACADEMY TRAINING IS NORMALLY WITHOUT CHARGE) IN OTHER
LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, BUT IS NOT PAYING FOR ANY
US-SPONSORED SCHOOLING RECEIVED. WE BELIEVE THAT MOST
MILITARY ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIPS ARE FURNISHED AT MINIMAL
COST BY OTHER LATAM COUNTRIES. IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT
GOP WILL PAY FOR US-SPONSORED TRAINING WHICH COULD BE
RECEIVED IN OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, AT LESS COST
AND IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE. WE EXPECT THAT THE GOP
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WOULD PAY FOR US-SPONSORED TRAINING ONLY IN CASES WHERE

SPECIFIC SKILL TRAINING WAS NEEDED THAT COULD NOT BE OBTAINED IN THIRD COUNTRIES AT LESS COST AND WHICH WAS UNAVAILABLE FOR US ON A GRANT BASIS. WE DO NOT FORESEE A GN BUDGETARY INCREASE FOR TRAINING SUFFICIENT TO OFFSET REDUCTION OR ELIMINATION OF GRANT TRAINING BY THE US. IF US-SPONSORED GRANT TRAINING WERE REDUCED THROUGH UNCOMPENSATED COST INCREASES, AND/OR IF THE GN WERE REQUIRED TO PAY FOR ALL TRAINING, BOTH THIRD COUNTRY AND US, THERE WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN ITS TRAINING PROGRAM AND AS A CONSEQUENCE A COROLLARY DEGRADATION IN ITS MILITARY CAPABILITY.

3. PARA 5C. THERE IS NO SINGLE TYPE OF TRAINING OR SPECIFIC COURSE WHICH CAN BE VIEWED AS BEING OF GREATEST BENEFIT TO US NATIONAL INTEREST. ON THE ONE HAND, TECHNICAL COURSES ARE OF HIGHEST INTEREST TO THE GN AND ARE MOST APPRECIATED BY THEM. SUCH COURSES PRODUCE TANGIBLE RESULTS WHICH HAVE AN IMMEDIATE POSITIVE EFFECT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GN DOES NOT VIEW MANAGEMENT COURSES AS PRODUCING IMMEDIATE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF THEIR IMPORTANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS. HOWEVER, THESE COURSES DO HAVE A LONGER RANGE BENEFIT TO THE US INTEREST, IN THAT THEY KEEP THE SEEDS OF US MILITARY DOCTRINE SOWN IN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE GN AND BENEFIT THE GENERAL QUALITY OF ITS LEADERSHIP. BOTH TYPES OF TRAINING ARE THEREFORE CONSIDERED BY EMBASSY/MILGROUP AS ESSENTIAL, AND BOTH ARE BEING ACCOMPLISHED AT THIS TIME. HOWEVER, BOTH TYPES COULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED AT A SATISFACTORY LEVEL AT INCREASED PRICES WITHOUT ADDITIONAL FUNDING.

4. PARA 5D. AS INDICATED ABOVE, WE EXPECT THAT FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS WOULD CAUSE GN TO FORESAKE MANAGEMENT COURSES IN FAVOR OF TECHNICAL TRAINING.

5. PARA 5E. CUBA HAS REPEATEDLY OFFERED TRAINING TO PANAMA. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IF GRANT TRAINING OFFERS FROM THE US WERE ELIMINATED OR SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED, PANAMA MIGHT ACCEPT SUCH CUBAN OFFERS ON A MODEST BASIS. WE DO NOT SEE ANY OTHER VERY LIKELY SOURCE FOR EQUIVALENT GRANT TRAINING. WHILE EFFECT OF SUCH TRAINING ON GN MILITARY

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COMPETENCE IS AN OPEN QUESTION, WE CONSIDER THAT SUCH TRAINING COULD HARDLY FAIL TO HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON GN INTEREST IN MILITARY MATERIAL (WHICH CUBA HAS ALSO INDICATED IT MIGHT MAKE AVAILABLE) FROM US OR IN US MILITARY DOCTRINE. WE EXPECT IT WOULD ALSO HAVE A CHILLING EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS, BOTH MILITARY AND GOVERNMENTAL. IN ADDITION TO ANY DIRECT NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF AVAILABILITY OF ASSISTANCE FROM CUBA WHICH WOULD NOT BE HAD FROM US,

GN WOULD VIEW CUTBACKS IN AVAILABILITY OF US TRAINING AS A "CATCH 22" DIRECTED TOWARD RESTRICTING ITS CAPABILITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN DEFENSE OF PANAMA CANAL (SEE PANAMA 1296 FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION). IN ANY EVENT, WITH OR WITHOUT A NEW CANAL TREATY, THE EFFECTS OF A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TRAINING BY CUBA WOULD BE VERY MUCH TO THE DETRIMENT OF US INTERESTS ON THE ISTHMUS.

6. PARA 5 F. THE US IS NOW, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, SEEKING TO BUILD THE FOUNDATIONS OF A MATURE AND RESPONSIBLE MILITARY PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GN, LOOKING TOWARD THE DAY WHEN THE GN WILL BEGIN TO PARTICIPATE JOINTLY WITH THE US IN DEFENSE OF THE PANAMA CANAL UNDER A NEW CANAL TREATY, AS ENVISIONED IN THE KISSINGER-TACK DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE ELIMINATION OF GRANT AID TRAINING WOULD BE A VERY SIGNIFICANT HINDERANCE. THE FINANCIAL BURDENS TO BE BORNE BY THE GN IN EQUIPPING ITS FORCES FOR SUCH A NEW ROLE ARE HEAVY. ADDING THE COSTS FOR SKILL TRAINING ON THEIR PROPOSED NEW EQUIPMENT, AND TACTICAL TRAINING FOR THE LEADERS OF THEIR PROPOSED NEW UNITS, WOULD BE TOO GREAT A BURDEN FOR THE GN TO BEAR. THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE EITHER GN TOO POORLY TRAINED TO COOPERATE ADEQUATELY WITH US, OR A GN ADEQUATELY TRAINED BY SOMEONE ELSE AND CORRESPONDINGLY LESS DISPOSED TO SUCH COOPERATION. NEITHER OUTCOME APPEARS TO US TO BE SATISFACTORY FOR OVERALL US NATIONAL INTERESTS IN PANAMA.

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